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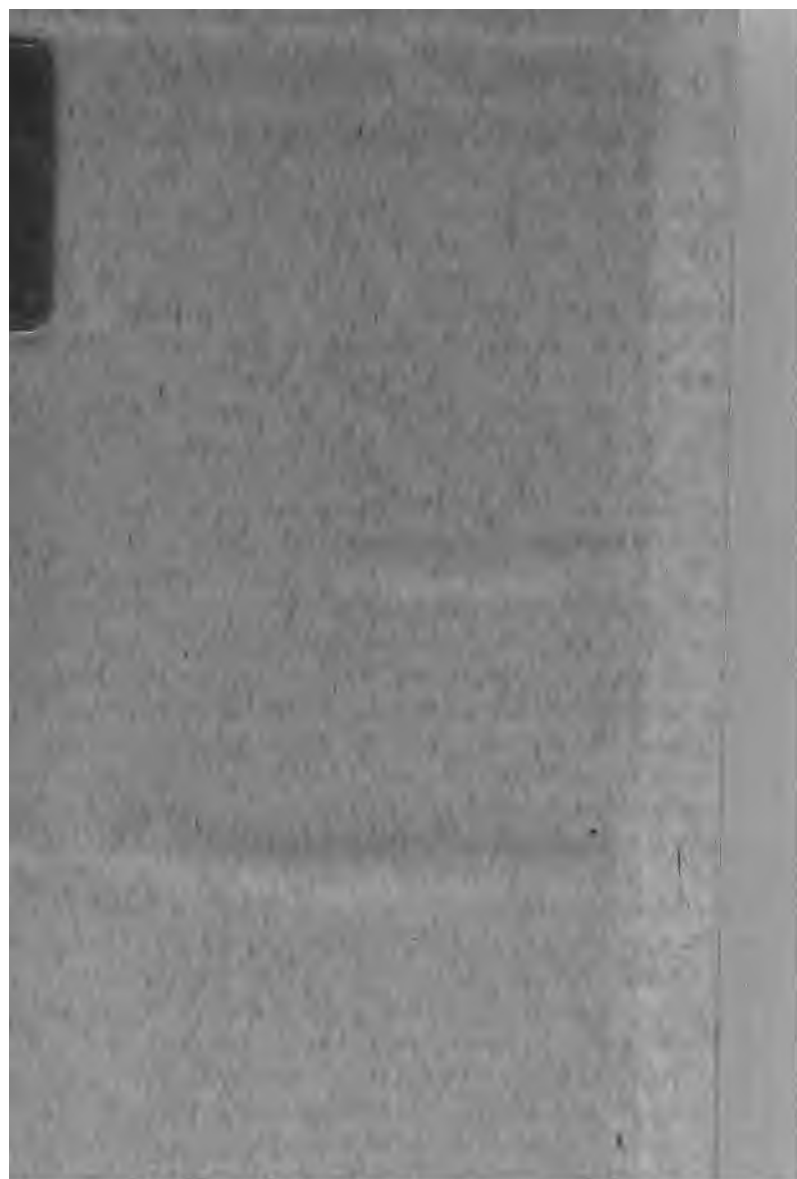
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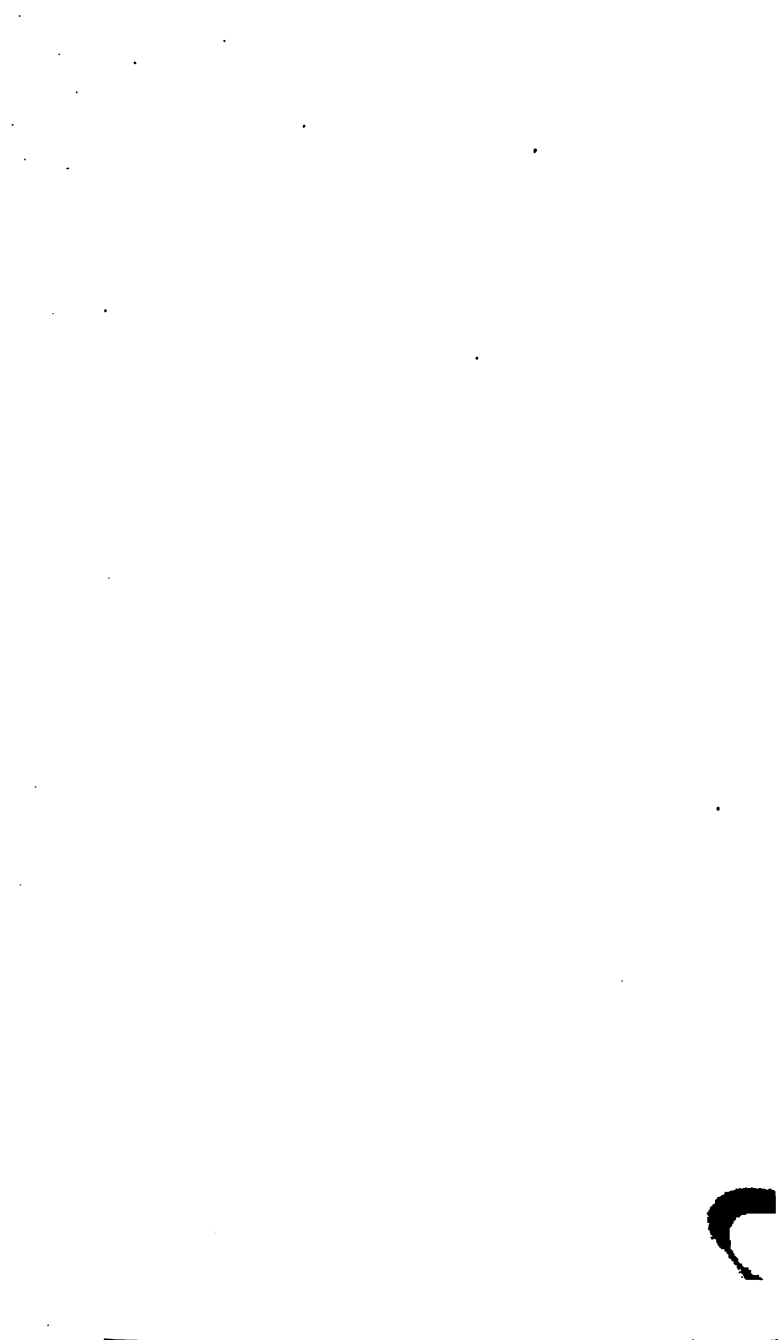
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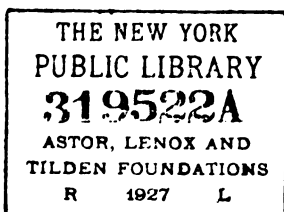
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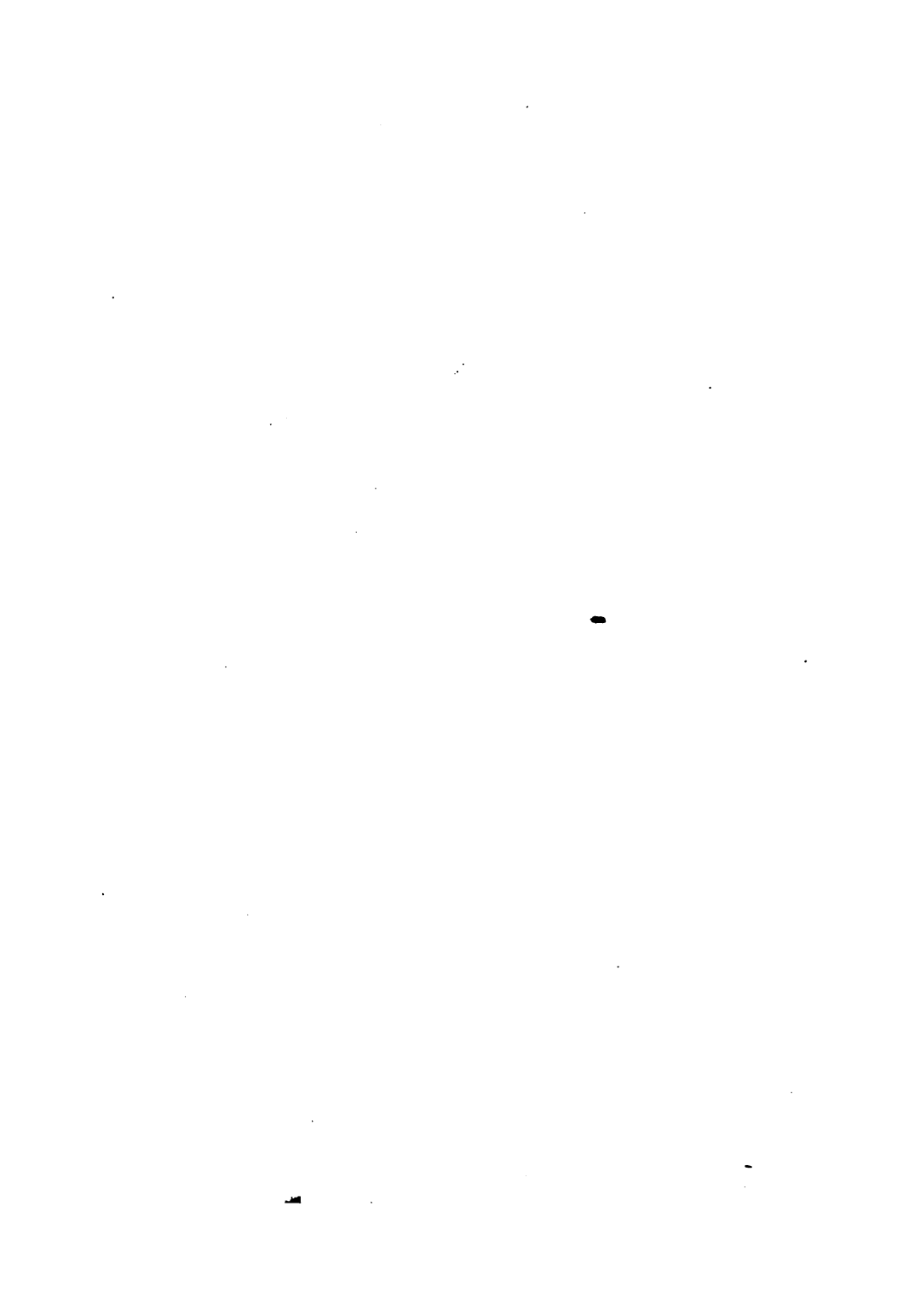


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THE DAUGHTER OF A HUNDRED MILLIONS.

CHAPTER I.

A MEETING.

"AND who is this coming in now, carrying herself so regally? Surely, it is the daughter of a hundred earls?"

"Oh! no, my dear, say rather the daughter of a *hundred millions!*"

At this all the ladies laughed and applauded Mrs. Selden's repartee.

The subject of her wit was a tall, slim, Titian-haired girl who entered the room quite alone.

Perhaps her dignity was assumed, perhaps it was natural. At any rate, the manner in which she entered made the suggestion altogether appropriate. Her shapely head was held royally above her white shoulders, her eyes looked neither to right nor left, one hand clasped loosely a large bunch of rare orchids, and she stepped as though her feet but led her to a throne.

Mrs. Ramsay, who was receiving the guests, ran forward with gushing cordiality.

"Ah! Miss de Fontaine!" she cried, taking the

girl's hand between both her own, "I am so glad you have come at last! I really feared you were going to disappoint us—and this evening of all others!"

The girl looked down upon her hostess, who was much her inferior in height, with an unmoved countenance. She said very little in reply, and her whole manner testified that she was a reserved and undemonstrative person. In a smaller woman so much dignity might have amounted to coldness or affectation. But in a girl whose proportions were those of a young war-goddess, and whose features were moulded in a classic mould, it seemed but a proper accompaniment. And Allaire de Fontaine had need of all her dignity—indeed of a little extraneous supply now and then—for her position was by no means an easy one. She was perfectly well aware how it was that she had been launched into this set which prided itself upon its exclusiveness. Had she not been the only child of a man who was many times a millionaire, she might have sat and sued in vain.

These charming ladies, who were so gracious and so civil to her, had each and all a sort of spiritual fish-hook dangling in the air, and that fishhook, like the more tangible ones, in order to draw successfully, must needs be baited.

There were eligible men floating about upon the waters of society—they must be lured to houses and induced to nibble. What more alluring bait for shy, piscatory creatures than a young millionairess?

This exclusive circle prided itself upon its birth and breeding. Relics of ancestors were treasured in cabinets of mahogany and gilt. Pedigrees were as long as *American pedigrees* can possibly be, and societies ex-

isted among them into whose ranks no one could hope to enter, save through the transmitted glory of a departed sire.

Allaire de Fontaine could display no such tokens. She had had no progenitor whose illustrious career could visit its glory into the second, let alone the third and fourth generations.

Her forefathers, as much as she knew of them, had represented the commercial interest of their country, and had never risen beyond a certain plane, which though respectable, was by no means illustrious. Her father even had not made any noticeable strides in the evolution of the individual. He was the same plain-spoken, unassuming, unpolished man his father and his grandfather had been.

Indeed, it seemed as if the development of that family lay all in the monetary line, and instead of sprucing up and polishing off and toning down in their persons, it was their fortune instead that went through all the degrees of progress, commencing with a proto-plastic penny and going through the intermediate stages up to a mature and mellow million.

But if they had been passed over heretofore in the refining process, it certainly could not be said of the present scion of the stock that she had remained untouched.

That she had made vast strides was evident in the fact that a total stranger had inquired whether she were the daughter of a hundred earls.

And it really was an immense surprise to the questioner to hear she was nothing of the sort, for she could not remember, in all her experience, having seen anyone with more apparent claim to the title.

Every movement of the girl had a sort of grand tradition about it, and seemed to speak of ancestresses who had reared their white shoulders so or held their fair heads in precisely such a manner.

"And so she is not a Clara Vere de Vere?" went on the stranger, reflectively.

"No, my dear," returned Mrs. Selden, brightly, "with Allaire de Fontaine it is not a case of ancestors, but posterity."

Then both ladies fell to watching the girl interestedly.

"Yes, so glad!" went on Mrs. Ramsay, "there is someone here to-night whom I am particularly anxious to have you meet—an Englishman—Lord Harrow."

The girl did not seem agitated. On the contrary, a shade of annoyance passed over her face. The truth was, she was far from obtuse and she understood perfectly what Mrs. Ramsay wanted of her.

"Do not hurry to present him, Mrs. Ramsay," she said, in her quiet way, "any time will do."

"No, my dear, not so!" put in Mrs. Ramsay, quickly; "there is no time like the present, you know."

Mrs. Ramsay had no daughters, and could afford to be generous.

Just then a tall, clean-shaven man appeared at the other end of the room, and Mrs. Ramsay sped over to him at once, leaving Miss de Fontaine standing alone. It was an interesting moment to the assembled guests, and those who were near enough looked on eagerly. It was not so interesting, however, as the moment which followed when the American girl, with her lack of ancestry but heaps of glittering gold, was presented to the proud descendant of an ancient and illustrious race. *The meeting was a picturesque one.*

Miss America, holding her priceless bouquet as though it were nothing more than a bunch of field daisies, inclined her lofty head with the air of some young victory poised upon a pinnacle.

There was no emotion, no sign of weakness about her. Blood, on the other hand, bowed low, and there was the gracious unbending of kings in his movements. One gloved hand lightly touched his white waistcoat, with the air of a courtier of the seventeenth century, and the *empressement* displayed was neither to be mistaken nor undervalued.

Had it been a scene upon the stage the audience would have applauded vociferously.

It was as if some great potentate, landing upon a rich but uncultivated shore, stepped up to one of the barbarians, and showing him a brilliant coronet of glass beads, offered it him in exchange for his beautiful land.

But it was furthermore as though the barbarian was not quite so much dazzled as his adversary expected and plainly showed that he was not going to surrender without a tussle.

Society had not known such a little *divertissement* for some time, and it followed the actors in the farce, or melodrama, whichever one is pleased to call it, with straining eyes.

Miss de Fontaine refrained from opening the conversation, and Mrs. Ramsay being called to her place to welcome another guest, it devolved upon Lord Harrow to do so.

He did not appear to be a much more talkative person than Miss de Fontaine, but, apparently, such an opportunity as a *millionairess* was not to be thrown

away, so with dogged determination he undertook a task which he, presumably under other circumstances, would have allowed to drop.

"Mrs. Ramsay tells me you are an American, Miss de Fontaine," he began, smoothly, "though your name seems to imply that you are of French descent."

"You are mistaken, Lord Harrow," answered the girl, "I have no French blood. My father's name was originally Fountain—my mother, herself, revised it about ten years ago!"

Lord Harrow looked at her slowly. Her words were impulsive and rather abrupt, but there was a certain candor in them that suggested the fresh breezes blowing across the plains of her native country.

It was evident that she intended there should be no delusions from the start.

Allaire flushed slightly after she had spoken, but she held her head up defiantly as though she would have him know she did not regret.

"I see," returned his lordship, politely, "names, as well as everything else come to be altered and transposed. I am told that were all of us informed of our original patronymics, we should scarcely recognize ourselves."

The words were conciliatingly spoken, which made Miss de Fontaine only more defiant. She would have preferred a conqueror who attempted to take her by force or by storm, rather than a wily diplomat who came to her with civility and finesse.

"Very possibly," was her meagre reply.

"You are fortunate in being the daughter of so glorious a country," went on Lord Harrow. He had taken *up his position* in front of her, with his hands folded

behind his back, and the shadow of a smile upon his clean-shaven face.

Allaire looked at him quickly and thought she detected all manner of hidden meanings in his speech.

Fortunate in being the daughter of so glorious a country!

He probably meant by that that it was fortunate for one who had no ancestors to be born in a land where such things were supposed, by foreigners, not to exist.

The adjective also was doubtless but a withering sarcasm employed to disguise his real opinion of the land of the free and the home of the brave!

It was insolent of him to taunt her, however polished his way of doing so, and she felt suddenly, that in spite of her lack of ancestry, she was better bred than he.

A swift wave of resentment rose up in her cold cheeks, and she turned her eyes upon her flowers which she began rearranging with much care. She bethought her of the grand old gardener and his wife who smiled at the claims of long descent and she, too, felt derisively toward such emptiness. She even tried to force a smile to express her derision, but, somehow, it was not a success, for she was innately conscious through it all of her own foolishness, and though she might smile and dub such things "emptiness," there were many more who would smile at her.

Her thoughts were not pleasant, and with a little impatient movement she broke off one of the delicate orchids and it fell from her fingers to the floor.

Lord Harrow immediately stooped and picked it up. As he did so she accidentally caught sight of his face. It was placid, calm, serene.

It seemed utterly incongruous to connect such things

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as insolence or petty personal spite with such a countenance. Though not strictly speaking handsome, it was a marked and noticeable face with certain high-bred lineaments and a noble, manly stamp which lifted it far above all littlenesses. Fine instincts, both of race and culture, sat on the strong, square brow, from which the brown hair waved away with a rather majestic sweep. His eyes were grey and fearless, and there being neither mustache nor beard, the workings of his well-cut mouth were plainly visible.

In short, it was a distinctly open countenance, and at the present moment it was as unclouded as a summer sky.

Allaire was a little ashamed of herself, but still she was not wholly convinced.

Of course he must be sneering at her.

It could not be otherwise, seeing their two positions. And if his face was frank and ingenuous—why, so much the worse! His duplicity then was all the greater!

Her bosom swelled suddenly, and a little diamond crescent she wore broke into stormy flashes in the folds of her lace.

Lord Harrow stopped and raised his eyebrows. It was impossible to be in so overcharged an atmosphere without perceiving it.

“Are you fatigued, Miss de Fontaine,” he asked. “Shall I find you a chair?”

She turned and faced him, her dark eyes one challenge.

“I am not fatigued, Lord Harrow, and I do not require a chair. The peasant race, you know, is by no means ethereal, and they do not feel the weaknesses which more exalted people suffer from!”

The Englishman's countenance did at last show some-

thing. It changed visibly, but the expression it took on was unmistakably one of genuine surprise.

He had been on the point of examining the delicacy of the flower he held in his hand, but he lifted his eyes slowly from it and looked at the girl instead, looked at her with a long, deliberate, questioning glance.

"Peasant race?" he repeated, quite puzzled. "Why do you speak of the *peasant* race, Miss de Fontaine?"

Then Allaire broke out. The hot color rose higher and higher in her usually pale face, and the diamond pin shot out its sparks like so many fierce little dagger stabs.

"Oh! I know," she began, speaking in a low, quick tone, "what you think of us—you foreigners! At best you think us but semi-barbarians with outlandish manners and strident voices, who rush all over the world, planting the stars and the stripes everywhere, and making ourselves obnoxious! We are not to be suppressed, and we rush in where angels' feet scarcely dare tread!—This is what you think of those who claim to be *F. F. V.'s* and other pitiful American boasts!—but if you think so of those, what must you think of us who can only *buy* our way with the almighty dollar!—Oh! yes, Lord Harrow, I know only too well the opinion you have of us!"

Lord Harrow stood absolutely still throughout this fierce little outburst. He did not smile, and his hand which held the orchid held it just as it did when his examination was abruptly terminated. The delicate blossom, already perishing, languished over his glove. His lordship heeded it not. His eyes had never moved from the girl's face while she spoke, and when she suddenly broke off, he regarded her for still another

moment in silence. Then all at once he seemed to note the melancholy plight of the flower, and he stroked it gently, attempting to revive its petals. After this he turned to Allaire.

"Miss de Fontaine," he began, in a tone which was gentleness itself, "you surely cannot think I have had any such thoughts of the American people? Why, I consider them the most charming, the most agreeable, the most *wonderful* people in the world! Their kindness of heart, their sprightliness of manner, and their fineness of physique fill me with unbounded envy, and oftentimes—I candidly confess it—put me to shame for my own countrymen! It would not only be bad taste in me, but gross ignorance as well, to criticise a race so universally esteemed and one from which I, personally, have been the recipient of so much courtesy—but you did right to rebuke me!—for, if through any stupidity of mine you imagined that I was slighting your people, it was both right and fitting for you to speak as you did, and I admire your patriotism. But, believe me, I have no such bigoted opinions. I do not lay claim to any great insight or cleverness, but it does not require a vast amount of discerning to appreciate the world-renowned qualities of my American brother! He—but there!—you do believe me, and you will pardon my stupidity in giving you any such impression?"

In a moment a winning smile had come over his face, illuminating it with a wonderfully attractive expression. It was all the more noticeable in the quiet, cautious strength of his English bearing, and convinced one of a very kindly and generous nature beneath the outward dignity of the man.

Allaire stood as one turned to stone.

Hot blushes of shame chased each other rapidly on her cheek, and seemed to mount to the very roots of her hair. Her eyes she could not raise, and her lashes made sepia shadows in the midst of so much pinkness.

When Lord Harrow had begun to speak, one of her hands had rested lightly against her gown—now, it clutched it stormily, crushing the satin into many high lights and sharp black shadows.

Her defiant head was bent at last.

To think that she had given vent to such a tirade and had been met by such dignity and gentleness! What would this courtly gentleman think of her, and would a speech such as she had treated him to help to keep up his respect for the race for which he expressed so much admiration? Lord Harrow, in his kindness and readiness to take upon himself all the blame, had given her the most effective rebuke that could possibly have been devised.

Her behavior which seemed so “smart” at first, now appeared to her like the most childish and stupid petulance.

Poor Allaire! She was quite swept off her feet, and she realized with a shock that was almost despair, that she could in no wise afford to smile at the claims of long descent.

For a moment or two she was blushing too hotly to make any reply, then she stole a look that was timid and abashed at Lord Harrow.

“I beg your pardon!”—she floundered, “I didn’t mean—I was very foolish——” She broke off helplessly and crimsoned again. But words were not necessary, for the suggestion of womanish weakness in the hand that grasped the gown was sufficient for any man, and

Lord Harrow, though he lay no claim to discernment, was by no means unconscious of the gesture.

"Please say no more, Miss de Fontaine," he said, promptly, "you will often find me clumsy—it is my misfortune, not my fault—but it would be kind of you to take no notice—but there!—they are starting up a square dance! May I offer you my arm? I do not waltz."

Allaire accepted the proffered arm, and as they prepared to move away the eyes of the on-lookers, who had enjoyed their gestures even if they had not caught their words, followed them regretfully.

It had been so interesting to watch the development. Beyond a doubt this was to be another of the great international matches which so diverted society, and made such an immense stir in the daily papers, and each one was personally interested because each one hoped to dance at the wedding.

It certainly could not fail to be a match, they whispered, for was it not thoroughly understood that Lord Harrow had come to New York to secure an American bride? His lordly estates were in a bad way, they understood; the walls and roofs of his castle were sadly out of repair; then there were debts contracted by the late earl—noble debts of course, but unfortunately, no less exempt from collection than plebeian ones.

"It was not destiny or any wild freak of fate which had thrown the impecunious nobleman with the richly dowered American girl," said Mrs. Selden, "but a deliberately-devised, carefully-calculated and altogether praiseworthy premeditation!"

Lord Harrow had an ancient name, a ruined castle, the entrée into the most select circles in Europe, and a

reputation, which if not stained by him personally, was certainly well dotted with the peccadillos of his noble ancestors.

Was it not a fair exchange for Allaire de Fontaine's recently revised name, her virgin heart and glowing young womanhood?

Indeed, so curious are the workings of that elusive and intangible corporation which calls itself society, that those who represented it at Mrs. Ramsay's dancing class, considered that the odds were very much on his lordship's side, and that Allaire de Fontaine had every cause to be thankful.

It was a foregone conclusion then as they moved away together that this man and young maiden were to form the next sensation which society should enjoy.

As Allaire took Lord Harrow's arm she blushed again. She was still uncomfortable. Though appreciative of his gentleness, she was rebellious and impatient. She could not forgive this stranger his superiority, nor the openness with which he sought her company.

Why so much courtesy?

He had come determined to win. Let him, then, wear the bold air of a conqueror instead of the sleek manner of one who capitulates.

But they made a royal pair, truly, as they passed along the reception-room. Both held their heads high. He, from hereditary pride, and she, because she had nothing to back her, no traditions to rely upon and only her own natural, girlish dignity to uphold her. Many paused to look at them as they passed.

Allaire in her white satin gown which fell about her in rich folds, outlining a form that was straight and supple, and full of young grace and vigor. She wore

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no ornaments save the small crescent in the folds of her lace, but her head, with its diadem of Titian tresses was as grandly decked as though she wore a coronet, and her arms and neck in their own whiteness were adorned the most.

Her flowers were tied with a long, pale-hued satin ribbon which fell almost to the hem of her skirt, and floated softly as she walked. Her face was calm, and from all that anyone could see she had never had an emotion in her life. She did not appear ever so little excited over the *éclat* of the moment, but passed on as placidly as though it were an everyday occurrence for her, the child of an American varnish manufacturer, to walk arm-in-arm with a peer of the realm. Lord Harrow beside her was a striking companion. Tall as she was, he was even taller, and it was good to see it so. Correctly dressed, from the parting of his smooth hair to the tips of his patent leather shoes, he was all that a man could be in elegance and distinction. He carried himself well with the Englishman's unconscious ease, and with a certain pompous air underlying it, which sat very well upon him, and which held out to the American mind all sorts of charming suggestions of courts and high ceremonial.

His foreignness was unmistakable. It was perceptible both in his clothes and his bearing, and in a certain slowly surprised way he had of looking at things as though they were not quite familiar.

It was in no wise unconformable or exaggerated, however, but subtle, and delicate—rather suggested than expressed—and therefore altogether delightful and much to be envied by young men of an *anglomaniacal* turn of mind.

His step was a little shortened to suit Allaire's, and as he walked he bent slightly and deferentially toward her, as though she were the one woman in the room.

It was beautifully done. Had he been her enraptured lover his manner could not have been more perfect. A royal couple, truly, and so excellently pitted one against the other! Each being able to supply so plentifully what the other lacked. Decidedly, a case of quits.

Lord Harrow led her to the dancing-room beyond where the sets were forming and everyone welcomed them with radiant smiles.

It, naturally, would be *the* set of the evening, where the English nobleman stood up with the American heiress.

If Lord Harrow had found Miss de Fontaine stiff and difficult in the other room, he soon saw her in an altogether different light.

Standing at the top of the room was a brown-eyed girl, short, roundly-made, a bit untidily dressed, with rebellious hair that would come dangling about her ears, and a manner and frequently occurring laugh which if a trifle noisy represented an at-homeness with things rather than any lack of refinement. This girl thrust out her hand to Miss de Fontaine as they were passing and asked if she were going to dance, "because if you are," she went on, "we need another couple and we'd like so much to have you, Allaire."

Miss de Fontaine's face changed with sudden spontaneity, and she responded to the brown-eyed girl with a readiness, which one seeing her for the first time in the other room might hardly have imagined possible. Her eyes lit up, her features warmed and a rare smile which had *dimples* and *girlishness* in it came over her

face. She held the outstretched hand for a moment and stood looking down into the eyes of the small girl from her glorious height with undisguised pleasure.

The two were as great a contrast as a tall young Norse maiden and a little brown gypsy, but it was clear there was a strong attachment between them.

"Of course we will dance here," returned Allaire, and then she presented Lord Harrow to Miss Selden.

Miss Selden was not overcome at the mention of a title. She greeted his lordship in an off-hand manner, and in a moment had turned from him altogether.

Her reason for so doing was glaringly apparent. Her partner was a young man with the darkest of dark hair, and an ardent face which one could easily fancy being selected by an artist for a Romeo or some other amorous hero.

He had the trim, slender, strongly-knit, graceful build of the young American of the day who excels in all manly sports, and the cavalier manner which takes so unerringly with the other sex.

He showed his rather crowded but very white teeth beneath his small dark mustache every time he laughed, and he laughed frequently. One was conscious of something joyous and radiant about him.

The girls casually made the men acquainted, and the name of the young American was Elvard.

It was to this individual that the inattention of Miss Selden to Lord Harrow was due. She turned back to the young man the moment after the presentation, her brown eyes seeking his, and reflecting his laughter and revelling in it. He could not move an eyelash, turn his head or wag a finger, without her following the *motion eagerly*.

That she was in love with him was plain to the most casual observer. She did not even attempt to cover up the admiring glances which welled to her eyes whenever she looked at him. Unblushing as was her attachment, however, it was innocent and touching.

They were both young things—full of sentiment and awakening feelings, but where he had enough of man's gumption to conceal his emotions, she had all of a young girl's overflowingness and effusion. But that she endeavored to treat him, adored as he was, with her customary off-handedness, was also apparent, and she chattered away to him in an audible tone which implied plainly that the whole world might listen if the whole world wished.

She addressed him frequently, calling him familiarly by his christian name—or by an even more familiar rendering of it.

Normie—and the way she uttered that *Normie*! It spoke volumes.

Lord Harrow and Allaire took up their positions vis-a-vis with this young couple.

Occasionally, before the music commenced, Miss Selden called over a word or two to Allaire, but after the dance began she scarcely had a chance to do so, for she was always either parting lingeringly from *Normie* or waiting with beaming eye for him to come back to her.

Allaire noticed that Lord Harrow was contemplating the pair silently. His English expression of slow surprise had settled upon his face. She felt that he was thinking queer things about American girls and she grew uncomfortable again. The fact that Norman Elvard was squeezing Dolly Selden's hand most openly did not add to her comfort.

CHAPTER II.

A WEALTHY FAMILY AT HOME.

OLD Joe Fountain scarcely recognized himself. As a boy in the village up the Hudson, his most exalted signature, cut with a brand new jackknife and still extant upon a rickety form in the old village schoolhouse, was Joseph Dennis Fountain, but now when he took out his Russia leather, silver-cornered cardcase and examined the contents he learned from sundry narrow bits of pasteboard therein that he was,

Mr. J. St. Denis de Fontaine.

Exactly how and exactly when the transformation had occurred the puzzled gentleman was unable to say, but it was probably by the same gradual process that seemed to have been going on about him all along.

This same process had transformed Mary, the red-cheeked country girl he had courted, into the resplendent dowager-duchess, who in finest silks and jewels, presided at his table and addressed him as Mr. de Fontaine. It had also swept away, bit by bit, all the old associations—his cretonne easy chair, his pipe, the old books he had found so much comfort in—the old friends even. But Joe Fountain could not complain. For in place of these primitive and simple luxuries, a mighty mansion of brick and stone had reared itself about him, servants in livery with deferential voices had sprung up, a spacious library with bookcases reach-

ing to the mouldings had taken the place of his little sitting-room. Electric buttons were everywhere under his finger, only waiting his pleasure to be pressed. Everything he had wished for as a boy had come to him fourfold in the most Aladdin-like manner. He remembered having thought once upon a time that a sturdy little cob and a carryall was about the sum of a man's bliss. He now had only to pay a visit to his stables to discover there a dozen thoroughbreds and every kind of vehicle, from a neat little runabout to a private omnibus in which a dozen guests might be transported to and fro. Old Joe sometimes scratched his head as he thought of it all.

Some of the things were comprehensible in a dim sort of way.

For instance, there were unguarded moments of his wife's when he could see flashes of the country girl, Mary, and catch a twang of her unaffected cheery voice. Sometimes in the morning, before the ceremony of the day commenced, he could make out traces of her early buxom charms.

But there was one object in the life of old Joe Fountain that he could not in anyway account for or understand. It bewildered him, stirred him, moved him with all the unutterable feelings that would move a man who, possessing absolutely no inspiration, beholds the most powerful work of art springing up under his fingers. This was the young, slender, fair-haired, white-browed creature, who moved about his rooms, seeming perfectly at home amid all the splendors, and calling him papa. She conversed in languages he could not understand, she was in charming array from morning till night, and her apartments were like those of a

young princess with ornaments of gold and silver lying about upon the tables and dressing-cases.

Her tastes were of the most regal order, and nothing was too good for her. She seemed to have read every book that ever was written, and to have met everybody there was to meet. She could talk easily to anyone with whom she came in contact, and she had the strangest way of not noticing things that would drive anyone else almost frantic.

For instance, something happened one day which puzzled the old gentleman more than all else about this wonderful radiant creature. They were in the drawing-room on Sunday afternoon with visitors, and the order had been given to serve tea. One of the black-gowned, white-aproned maids appeared at the door with a tray on which were the silver and porcelain implements of that social diversion, when a gentleman who was standing near shifted his position, and in doing so knocked the tray from the maid's hands and everything went crashing to the floor.

The wonderful damsel did not even turn around but went on talking and smiling as if nothing had happened, while poor old Joe, almost crazy, rushed forward and began picking up the débris with distracted fingers.

Still the damsel smiled on. Then he, thinking perhaps she had not heard the crash, called out :

"Don't you see, daughter, she's broken all these things—cups and saucers and everything—it's an outrage !"

Whereupon the girl turning around, looked entirely unconcerned and said in an even voice :

"Never mind, papa, they were only cheap little

things," and went immediately back to her conversation. Only cheap little things! Why, he had paid for those things himself, and every one of those cups, tiny as it was, had cost ten dollars if it had cost ten cents!

And she called them cheap!

Old Joe eyed the girl with knitted brows and gaping mouth, and ever since that day the mystery of her deepened.

It was not that he was angry—no one could be angry with a creature so sweet—but it was bewildering to him to think of anyone holding dollars so lightly. And to think that she was his own flesh and blood, too! Why, he could not see a trace of it in any of her lineaments, not a trace of either himself or her mother.

He remembered having thought what a splendid complexion Mary had when he was courting her. She could not walk ten steps without her cheeks becoming so rosy that one could almost warm his hands at their glow; but what was to be said of the complexion of Mary's daughter? It was as white and delicate as the inner side of a dove's wing, and so transparent that one could see the blue veins beneath its surface as distinctly as the river lines on a map. Only the faintest pink was in her cheeks, and yet in spite of the delicacy it looked quite as wholesome as Mary's more blooming tones.

"Where did she get it?" pondered old Joe, as he touched his own leathery skin and glanced at his hands that were brown and furrowed.

Even the name of this radiant mortal was unfamiliar to him.

Allaire.

He did not know the name at all. He knew Emmas and Susans and Carolines and Marias, and if anyone wanted something a little more fancy there were Matildas and Henriettas—but this Allaire—what did it mean anyhow? It was spelled so strangely too. Why wasn't it just Aller? (he pronounced it so) instead of all those double l's and i's that only puzzled one?

But he did not object to the name. No, not for the girl. Somehow, she didn't look like a Susan or an Emma, or even a Matilda or Henrietta, and perhaps it was just as well for Mary, whom, by the way, he now addressed as "Marry" to have made up such a fanciful appellation.

A wonderful name was only proper for a wonderful girl, and if he could but get his tongue twisted to say it, the way she did, he shouldn't object to Allaire at all.

Poor old Joe! Varnish might build up mansions and fill his pockets with gleaming gold, and make his lot in life an easy one, but it could no more polish and refine him than it could an old pine barrel that has lain in the lumber-room for three score years, and as he gazed at the wonderful being whom he had reared and nurtured, he felt like the plain little speckled hen which has unknowingly hatched a swan's egg, and sees with unspeakable amazement the creature it has brought forth spread her white wings and sail away.

Mr. and Mrs. de Fontaine sat at breakfast in their richly tapestried dining-room.

Mr. de Fontaine was considered a rather peculiar gentleman by the servants, because he always tucked his napkin under his chin while eating. It was there now while he enjoyed his brook trout.

Mrs. de Fontaine sat opposite, attired in a brocade

morning gown, which though becoming and handsomely made, looked somewhat forced.

It is hard to be at one's best early in the morning.

Mrs. de Fontaine often found it so.

The room was gorgeous with panellings of deep toned mahogany and embossed leather. Famous pieces of Italian tapestry hung here and there, upon which gods and goddesses, nymphs and shepherdesses disported themselves among garlands and vines, festoons and nosegays, in the most nonchalant manner.

Almost an entire wall of the room was occupied by a magnificent Chippendale sideboard, richly wrought, highly polished and curving in graceful lines. The display upon this sideboard suggested the show window of a silversmith during the holidays. Such a brilliant and diversified display of flagons, bowls, decanters, stands, baskets, trays, goblets, chafing dishes, loving cups and other novelties—it seemed as if it could only be a Christmas exhibition, where there was something to catch every eye.

Against an opposite wall was another splendid piece of furniture—a cabinet of mahogany with front and sides of glass. The shelves within contained nothing but crystal—bowls, carafes, dishes and glasses of every size, and the morning sun cut capers with the fine points and diamond patterns until it was almost as dazzling as the silver.

The floor of the dining-room was of tessellated woods, also highly polished, and covered almost entirely by a magnificent oriental rug, whose deep, glowing coloring was admirably suited to the general rich tone of the room. There was not an object to be seen anywhere, from the bronze clock on the artistic mantel to

the towering palms in the bay window, that did not suggest riches, luxury, power.

The morning sun broke through the great stained glass casements, flooding every corner with radiance, and impressing one with a calm, sober, daylight sense of all the splendor.

A flunky in livery attended upon the meal, moving about with noiseless tread and serving the dishes with ceremony from a side table.

It was odd to look at the couple seated at breakfast and reflect what they had been born—a pair of simple, rustic children in low-roofed, frame cottages in a country village where such things as stained glass, and oriental rugs were practically unknown.

As usual, it was the woman who had adapted herself more readily to the new state of things.

Mrs. de Fontaine was always sumptuously gowned. Besides which her hair was still thick and brown, and she had a maid who dressed it to perfection.

She was only a little gauche, only a little uncertain of herself, and it was not often that she made what her fashionable friends call in their drawing-room argot, a "break." These occasions, however, were very painful to Allaire. She looked at her mother sometimes and thought sadly that if she did not try so hard to be a lady she would be very much more of one, for her manner when she forgot herself was kind and whole-souled. But as soon as company appeared she lost her naturalness and became constrained and overanxious, interlarding her conversation with "my butler," "my carriage" and "Fifth Avenue," three subjects which made Allaire shiver.

The good lady had not the faintest suspicion that her

doings were ever a trial to her daughter, and Allaire was too respectful and gentle to make any remonstrances, so Mrs. de Fontaine loaded her plump neck with diamonds, and got herself up like a Begum and went on her way rejoicing.

Mr. de Fontaine was not so brilliant a success as his wife. Although his suits were always fashioned by the best tailors, they never looked exactly as if they were made for him or he for them.

His face was kind and genuine, but it was bronzed and rugged, and his beard had a wayward and rustic tendency to grow beneath his chin. His hair seemed reluctant to come to the stately dignity of pure white, and stuck persistently at an iron grey that was somewhat dingy and looked as if it needed glossing.

It was Mrs. Selden with her ready wit which spared no one, who once remarked that they might "dress old Joe Fountain up all they wished, and stick as many diamond studs in his shirt front as it would hold, but he would still look as if he would be ever so much happier in a pair of overalls, hoeing potatoes."

The breakfast had not proceeded very far when the velvet hangings were drawn aside, and a beauteous apparition in pale blue stood upon the threshold. The late hours of the night before had not tarnished her brightness, and after an untroubled, childish sleep, Allaire had awakened fresh and rosy as the morning.

Her robe was one of those diaphanous, poetical affairs, all lace and furbelows, which are supposed to be so *négligé* and yet which are in reality oftentimes the very highest conceptions of the dressmaker's art. It clung about the girl's straight young form, half concealing, half revealing, and draping her far more classically

than a more conventional costume. A girdle, studded with turquoises, clasped her above the hips and wide, full sleeves fell away from her delicate wrists.

She had twisted her bright hair in a simple fashion at the back of her head, and it waved away naturally and softly from her temples. That she was a picture to gladden the hearts of any parents one could not deny, and it was not surprising that the pair seated at the table looked up with fond and beaming glances when she appeared in the doorway.

The old gentleman drew the corner of his napkin hastily across his lips and tipped back in his chair to receive his morning kiss.

Allaire kissed them both affectionately and patted her father's shoulder.

She was very fond of her parents, very submissive to them and deeply appreciative of the advantages they had given her. That she sometimes felt pained and uncomfortable at things they said, was not her fault, and she even tried to persuade herself that she never had such feelings.

It is one of the sad things in life, that parents in giving their children advantages which they, themselves, have never had, furnish the first awakenings in the child's mind of the shortcomings of the authors of their being.

Oftentimes, in spite of the pleasure she derived from her education, Allaire wished she had not been so carefully cultivated and improved. It seemed to take her farther and farther from the parent stem, and to make her conscious that the same sap that had nourished her father and mother could never be sufficient nourishment for their daughter.

The lovely hothouse plant had been so rarely nurtured that it no longer knew its kindred of the fields and must hereafter grow away from them in its own tempered atmosphere.

"Well, my dear," said her mother, as she took her place at the table, "did you have a good time at the party last night?"

Mrs. de Fontaine always called evening affairs "parties."

"Yes, mamma, very pleasant," returned Allaire, "and I tried to remember all the gowns to tell you this morning. Let me see; Mrs. Ramsay wore—old rose, I think, and Clara Converse and Miss Bailey were in respectively, pink and blue. There was a stranger there, a lady from Washington, the wife of a senator, I believe, who had a Nile green that was very becoming and quite new in style. The train was of a contrasting shade and although something like a court train was not one exactly. The Brown girls had on—well, I really don't know what, but at any rate they looked well and seemed to have a very good time."

"What did Dolly Selden wear?" asked Mrs. de Fontaine, interestedly.

"Dolly? Oh, Dolly looked sweet! She had on some kind of a white gauze over pink——"

"As mussy as ever?" interrupted her mother.

"Oh, mamma, Dolly isn't mussy, she is only perfectly natural and unaffected!" Allaire flushed a little as she stood up for her friend.

"Of course her hair was coming down?" said Mrs. de Fontaine.

"No, it was very prettily arranged, and if a little curl peeped out here and there it was all the prettier."

"Did she dance much?"

"Yes. Most of the time with Mr. Elvard."

"They ought to stop that," said Mrs. de Fontaine, shaking her head ominously.

Allaire looked up from her plate with questioning eyes.

"Why?" she asked. "He seems to be a nice young man, good-looking and bright, and his manner I'm sure is most attractive."

"No money," returned her mother, darkly.

Here the old gentleman put in a word. He emerged from his coffee cup and looked up.

"People can't live on nothing, nowadays," he remarked, sententiously.

"But Mr. Elvard must have something," went on Allaire, "he couldn't go out as much as he does and dress as well if he didn't have anything at all."

"It don't cost a young bachelor much," answered Mrs. de Fontaine, "they can scramble along pretty decently by themselves. They don't know much about the luxuries," and she swept a furtive glance over her magnificent surroundings.

Allaire made no reply. If there was one subject in the wide world utterly distasteful to her, it was money, and she could scarcely hear the word mentioned without a shudder. It suggested to her everything that was insincere and mocking and vexatious in life. She was by no means so quixotic as to wish that her splendid fortune might be swept away, but there certainly were moments when she felt it a great barrier between herself and the genuine and disinterested friendships she so longed for.

It was sure to come out, sooner or later, that the

people whom she believed loved her for herself alone, were not altogether so wrapped up in her as she supposed, but that the golden nimbus which encircled her had a great deal to do with their affection.

That is, all save Dolly Selden. Dolly was too haphazard and careless to care about money, and instead of refraining from mentioning the subject to her, as many of Allaire's acquaintances did, she rattled on about it, lightly, jeeringly, comically, until Allaire was almost ready to bless her for belittling a subject which others treated with such profound reverence and awe.

She did not reply to her mother at once, but sat peeling her fruit in silence, handling the exquisite little silver fruit knife with graceful movements.

"Yes," went on Mrs. de Fontaine, taking up the refrain, "they ought to put a stop to it."

"But mamma," said the girl, laying down the knife, "it is certain it is for herself."

Her words were rather ambiguous, perhaps, but she had been following such a vigorous train of thought, that she had lost the connection of what had been said, and was answering herself rather than any words which had been spoken.

"What is for herself?" asked Mrs. de Fontaine.

"Why," returned Allaire, suddenly conscious of her irrelevancy, "I mean that Mrs. Selden can be sure that Mr. Elvard loves Dolly for herself alone and not for her fortune."

Mrs. de Fontaine laughed.

"Well, yes, I suppose so, since she hasn't a penny."

Again the millionaire emerged from his coffee cup.

"A couple of paupers can't run a very swell establishment, nowadays," he observed.

Soon Mrs. de Fontaine's mind flew to another topic.

"What did Mrs. Selden wear?" she asked.

Allaire pondered for a moment, playing with the orange skin and heaping the seeds up in a corner of her plate.

"Really, mamma," she said at last, "I couldn't tell you—I scarcely saw Mrs. Selden all evening. She did not pay much attention to me nor I to her."

"Who all did you dance with, dear?"

Allaire tried not to feel that her mother's question might have been a little differently arranged. It was unkind to criticise the phraseology of one's mother, especially so kind a mother. Allaire looked at her gently. The mother was bending forward, all interest, all sympathy, in her daughter's pleasure. It was impossible not to note the affection in her glance, and suddenly Allaire's face warmed and she felt with an honest thrill that she was more ashamed of herself than of her parent.

"Oh," she returned, brightly, "I danced with everyone—Fred Selden, Mr. Temple, Mr. Ramsay—and everyone who asked me. I didn't devote myself to Norman Elvard nor to any one else, but distributed my favors as generally and as diplomatically as possible."

"That's right, Aller," said her father, gravely, "continue to do so until some fellow with a handle comes along—then you want to narrow down, to one and drop the others like hot cakes!"

No one noticed the flush that mounted slowly in Allaire's soft cheek. She bent her head over her plate and appeared to be absorbed in her breakfast.

The meal continued in silence. Neither mother nor *father* were aware that anything was in the wind, but

drank their coffee and ate of the delicacies with utter complacency.

It is one of the characteristics of people not possessed of the greatest refinement that their faculties are dulled while eating. Their enjoyment of their food is almost an animal enjoyment, and like the animals, the occupation of feeding is so absorbing that they are insensible for the time being to every outside emotion.

Allaire did not find this great absorption in the matter of her meals, and this morning less than ever, and by and by she arose and pushed back her chair.

"I think I'll go to see Dolly to-day," she said.

"Will you take the brougham?" inquired her mother.

"No," returned Allaire, lightly shaking out her ruffles, "I would rather walk."

"Walk?" echoed her mother, "but, dear child, nobody walks!"

Allaire smiled.

"Oh, yes, mamma," she answered, "one occasionally sees a pedestrian or two in the streets of New York—besides I want some exercise."

"But someone might think you hadn't a carriage!" objected her mother seriously.

"Mamma, dear," and Allaire stood up in all her proud young height and looked down upon her mother with a serene smile, "what difference what anyone thinks?" Then she turned and crossed the room with a light step. She had just reached the doorway and was about to pass out, when turning slightly, she addressed both parents in a comprehensive glance, "Oh! by the way," she said, quietly, "I met an Englishman last evening—Lord Harrow."

Mr. de Fontaine set his cup down suddenly upon the saucer with a little crash and pulled the napkin from his collar.

Mrs. de Fontaine stopped with a morsel of food close to her lips and balanced her fork in air.

"What's that, my dear?" asked her father, "come back a moment."

Allaire advanced a few paces into the room and stood holding the curtain.

"A genuine nobleman?" inquired her mother, still balancing the fork.

"I suppose so," returned Allaire, "since he was at Mrs. Ramsay's."

"Is his name in the peerage?" asked her father, cautiously.

"No doubt it is," answered Allaire.

"Was he attentive to you?"

The questions were fired like shot, and this last one was put by her mother and its answer was hung upon eagerly—devouringly.

"He was polite to me," returned Allaire, and then as recollections came over her, her cheeks began to tingle and her pulses to quicken. "He was very courteous indeed," she added.

"And how about my little girl?" said the father, archly, "did she take a fancy to his lordship?"

His question showed a humane spark, but there was a larger amount of human interest underlying it.

An excess of shyness took possession of Allaire and she wrapped the velvet curtains about her and felt curiously childish and silly.

"Really, papa," she said, hesitatingly, "I don't know father what him very *distingué* and—and—nice—but,

then, you see, I hardly know him!" She broke off suddenly and unwrapped herself from the portière. "But I must run!" she exclaimed, "Dolly might be out," and ere another question could be propounded she had fled. Before she was out of the way, however, she overheard her mother saying to her father, "We must have him to dinner."

Allaire ran upstairs to her room with all speed. She felt that the news of her meeting with Lord Harrow was due her parents and she had struggled hard to make the disclosure. Yet why it was so difficult to make she could not think. She always told them whom she met and she had never before experienced any difficulty in so doing. She seldom went anywhere without her mother, but at Mrs. Ramsay's dancing class no married women except the patronesses were allowed, and Mrs. de Fontaine, though she would dearly love to be, was not a patroness. Allaire, therefore, was always conducted to and fro by her maid. Several times during breakfast it had been on the tip of her tongue to say a word about the Englishman she had met the night before, but she could not bring herself to do so, and she had almost left the room without mentioning his name. She had known exactly the scene which would take place at the mention of a title. She could see her kind-faced old father waking up suddenly and fixing her with a significant glance which she could not even think of without blushing hotly. She could also see her mother prick up her ears and become all eagerness and curiosity. They were ambitious for her, that she knew, and that she should make a brilliant match was the wish that lay nearest their hearts. After all their devotion and the bounties they had lavished upon her,

girl had ever imagined was visible to Allaire de Fontaine as she cast her eyes about her.

The heiress heaved a sigh.

One could not have the luxuries of a princess without paying the penalty; and rare advantages, objects of beauty and surroundings of great value could only go in exchange for a coronet or lordly title.

For a moment Allaire held her breath. What would it be like if she had but one simple little room, only a few girlish treasures, a life free from the restraints and impositions of wealth.

The heiress dwelt upon the picture.

Her young heart was full of warmth and sentimental yearnings, and as she looked about her and the valuable objects met her eye, one by one, she felt with a sudden rush that one ray of genuine affection was worth them all.

They say that a jeweler becomes so accustomed to the sight of splendid gems, that he thinks nothing of them and wonders how people can sell themselves for such commonplace things as diamonds.

The heiress looked upon her articles of *vertu* and longed for a loving heart.

Heretofore Allaire had only felt these things vaguely, but since her meeting with Lord Harrow all had become distressingly distinct.

From the moment of their introduction she had felt his dominating force and the conviction that he had come as her conqueror. It was predestined. His condition required an heiress, hers a title.

It was a fair exchange. So Lord Harrow viewed it, and her parents saw it in the same light. And although she was the one upon whom it all depended, the link

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with which the connection was to be made, she had no word to say in the matter, and simply because she had more of this world's goods than some others, she must submit without a struggle and yield up her soul when requested to do so.

Ah! people talked so often of the advantages of wealth, did they ever reckon of its disadvantages?

CHAPTER III.

CONFIDENCES.

WHEN Allaire descended the steps a little later, nothing could have been in better taste for a morning walk than the tailor-made costume she wore. It was without trimming of any kind and its tone was a rich dark blue. It fitted her to perfection, and curved in exquisite lines. Her hat was small and rather severe, but with a tailor gown it was chic and jaunty. She drew on a pair of heavily-stitched gloves before she left the house, and they formed the finish to a costume that was both smart and elegant.

The walk to Dolly's was a considerable one, but Allaire was an excellent walker and as her feet touched the pavement a happier frame of mind stole over her at once. The morning air was brisk, moreover there was freedom in it. Walls may be ever so daintily draped with satin, or with gorgeous stuffs from beyond the seas, but they can be quite as much a prison as the canary's gilded cage.

The de Fontaine's gorgeous mansion faced Central Park on the upper avenue in line with the other magnates and millionaires.

The Seldens lived in a small house in one of the lower side streets between Park and Lexington Avenues. Many good old families lived around them, and all had dwelt in the same houses for many years.

There was a quiet air of respectability about the